

SADDEST CHRISTMAS SEASON EUROPE HAS EVER KNOWN

Depths of Sacrifice Reached Since the First Eager Throb of the War Spirit a Year Ago

VICTORY may come and victory may go, but no future triumphs or defeats can ever soften for Europe the memory of this dark Christmas of 1915, the saddest she has ever known. Pride in the present and faith in the future sustain every one of the warring peoples in their exaltation of sacrifice. But as Christmas—Christmas, the feast of the home and of the family—exaltation dies, and only sorrow, the sorrow of the bereft individual, remains. It is a very different Christmas Europe is approaching this year from that of a year ago. Then the shock and excitement of the beginning of the war were still tingling. In England the question of munitions is to-day of no less importance to the popular mind than, a year ago, was the absorbing question of getting a plum pudding to every man in the trenches. There was still talk of the Kaiser's dining in Paris, and discussions as to which ruler should lead the triumphant Allies in procession through Unter den Linden.

Victory seemed a much simpler matter a year ago than it does to-day. Every one admitted then that victory would be bought only with sorrow and sacrifice. Now every one knows, with the hard knowledge of experience, that victory will be bought only with sorrow heaped on sorrow and sacrifice heaped on sacrifice. It is this knowledge borne in on every home, however exalted or however humble, that makes the Christmas celebration of 1915 in Europe a solemn sacrament of sorrow.

Of all the warring peoples Christmas means the most to the Germans and on none will the sacrifice of the traditional customs of the day fall so heavily. There is no blood and iron in the German Christmas. There is instead a tender and appealing sentiment that is typical of all that is best in the German character. The whole world is indebted to Germany for the Christmas tree and for many of the most delightful of the Christmas stories and customs that Americans have adopted as their own. The German Christmas is a day for the home, the family and the children, with its very custom endeared by generations of tradition.

The exact origin of the Christmas tree and its significance in a religious festival are not very clear. The first historical mention of it is contained in the notes of a certain citizen of Strasbourg of unknown name who in 1594 wrote: "At Christmas they set up fir trees in the parlors of Strasbourg and hang thereon roses cut out of many colored papers, apples, wafers, gold foil, sweets, &c." There is no record of lighted candles until 1737. Until the nineteenth century the Christmas tree was still a novelty and a luxury. Then, however, it became a necessity. No German was too poor or too lonely to have his Christmas tree with its lighted tapers. No struggling emigrant in a foreign land, no humble sailor on the high seas but when Christmas eve came around set up a tiny tree, decorated it as best he could, and by the light of its flickering candles feasted all the love of home and fatherland that his soul contained.

The present war time Christmas recalls a story of the Crimea. A few German soldiers with the foreign legion in the trenches before Sebastopol set up a Christmas tree. Its lights blazed up and drew the Russian fire. Every man in the group around it was killed, but the tree itself was untouched and still twinkled merrily until it was hastily pulled down and extinguished by the English soldiers.

The real German Christmas celebration occurs on Christmas eve. About 1 o'clock the dinner is served, an elaborate and hearty feast, consisting of a long series of traditional dishes, all eaten in a state of wild excitement. During this meal the Kristkind makes its appearance. This figure is a curious product of sentiment and imagination, a queer combination of the Holy Child, the good fairy and our own Santa Claus. It is represented in the country districts by a half grown child made up as an angel, who goes from door to door calling for the good children, distributing sweets at one house and begging for them at the next.

After dinner comes the great moment when the doors are opened into the Christmas room where the lighted tree has the place of honor. The tree is always placed near a window so that every passerby can see and share it. A walk through the deserted residential streets of any German town at this hour on Christmas eve leaves a memory of Christmas cheer and spirit that can never be forgotten.

By 8 o'clock the family is ready to eat again, a light supper including still more of the traditional Christmas

dishes. Every one, rich or poor, has Nuremberg ginger cake, its shiny brown surface decorated with almonds and raisins, and with the word "Weihnachten" and the year worked out in pink and white frosting. Stollen, a sort of plum cake, and many sweet biscuits of various shapes and sizes are all indispensable parts of this feast.

But in Germany this year Christmas, the happy, simple Christmas of the home and the family, will be but a pale shadow of itself. There are few families that are not separated by the war. There are few homes that are not bereft. There are none where the exigencies of military regulation will not curtail or absolutely prohibit the beloved Christmas customs.

Germany has met the demands of necessity without faltering. She publishes proudly to the world that her scientists have developed a nutritive flour made from straw, a satisfactory butter derived from sunflower seeds, a nutritious dish rich in food values made from wood boiled and chemically treated. Without a murmur of dissent she denies herself the crusty roll, the whipped cream and the sweet cakes that her very soul loves. But even this spirit falters at the prospect of a Christmas without candles for the Christmas tree or without Lebkuchen. And that is the Christmas that Germany is facing. It is "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out.

Last year there were candles and cakes a plenty for every one, whether at home or at the front. The soldiers were overwhelmed with packages of Christmas sweets. Every dugout, every bomb proof shelter in the long line of trenches was gay with blazing Christmas trees. In Munich the soldier dead were not forgotten, for in all the cemeteries on hundreds of new-made graves twinkled the lights of little Christmas trees, the saddest, bravest sight in all Germany.

But this year, with a shortage of fats in her food supply so severe as to demand serious attention on the part of the Government, there is in Germany no butter or milk for the Christmas cakes, no tallow or wax for the Christmas candles. To many people this little homely deprivation will bring a realization of the severities of war more vivid and more compelling than even the sight of the growing graveyards. With a million new graves in the land, with dire necessity robbing her dearest holiday of its dearest symbols, no triumph of arms can make this Christmas of 1915 anything but a sad and sorrowful feast in the homes of the German Empire.

In Austria the Christmas celebrations are as varied as the races and religions that make up that great loosely knit empire. Where the Greek Church prevails the celebration occurs a fortnight later than ours; that is, on January 7. It is accompanied by feasting and by various local customs. The Slovaks of Bohemia and Moravia have curious Christmas usages in which superstition has entirely triumphed over religious significance.

This is the great day of the year when the peasant appears all the invisible world of spirits. On the afternoon of Christmas eve the whole household marches in solemn procession to the stables and cow houses carrying bread, salt and beans. These are offered to the animals with certain hallowed words, and great is the dismay if any cow or any chicken is indifferent to the offering.

Returning to the house the parents sprinkle all their unmarried daughters with water sweetened with honey, thus insuring them honest, good tempered husbands. The entire family then sip of silovitz, a strong native liquor distilled from plums. A small quantity of this is then poured on the floor to conciliate such other spirits as may have been overlooked. Every one then falls on the Christmas feast without ceremony.

But this year war has reached out to the remote districts and blighted even such simple Christmas celebrations as this. The men of the families are all gone. Only the very young and the very old remain. There will be no blessing of the kids this year, for there are no kids to bless. All have long since gone to supply the army. There will be no Christmas feasting, for food was long ago reduced to the smallest quantity that will sustain life. And every day, in every village, the list of the widowed and orphaned grows longer and longer.

Vienna is known as a gay, light hearted city. Its Christmas observance is ordinarily a happy combination of religious ceremony and Teutonic good cheer. But this year the brilliant midnight masses will be attended by black robed mourners and there will be no good cheer in Vienna. There are few people who will deny that the saddest figure in Europe to-day is Francis Joseph of Austria, not



Christmas morning in Europe.

Francis Joseph the Emperor, but Francis Joseph the man, last of his generation, stricken in every personal relation, clinging blindly to a burned out life, not for the sake of living, but for fear of the often repeated prediction that when he dies the power of Austria will die with him. No widow, no fatherless child, no orphaned child in the war made orphans of France, need envy the Christmas of the old man in the palace of the Hofburg. A feast will be spread for him, lights will blaze on a Christmas tree before his dimmed eyes, a punctilious court will pay him every personal honor—but no one in the world will be so lonely or so sad on Christmas Day as he.

The Christmas celebration in all the countries where the Greek Orthodox Church prevails are much the same. As the holiday itself is preceded by a severe fast the Christmas feast takes on a highly important character. In many parts of Russia, especially in the cities, the gift giving Christmas tree has been borrowed from the Germans. While a pudding of rice and raisins is the feature of the Christmas eve feast, from this feast has now been taken its crowning glory, the vodka bottle.

By this lack, if by nothing else, will the war be felt in every peasant home in Russia. Until last year it was a poor Christmas feast that did not leave most of its participants absolutely paralyzed from drink. But vodka is no longer to be had in Russia, and the priests who on Christmas Day make the rounds of the homes in their parishes murmuring blessing and sprinkling holy water will this year find fewer insensible people to accept their ministrations.

Christmas eve in Russian communities is accompanied by much begging and merrymaking in the streets. Maskers go about asking each other for money and sweetmeats, while street urchins eagerly offer their services to sing praises of Christ in front of the different dwellings.

In only one other part of Europe has the heel of war pressed so hard as in Russian Poland; in only one other place has the season of peace and good will be such a bitter mockery as to the hunted and starving Poles.

And this is in Serbia, poor, brave, beaten Serbia, with its whole population, an entire people, fugitive before hated and terribly feared invaders. During three years Serbia has been swept by three wars, the present one so relentless and so overwhelming as literally to wipe out the ordinary relationship of the people to life. They have ceased to have homes; they have ceased to possess property; they must burrow in the earth for shelter and forage for their uncertain food like wild animals. With her army making a heroic and hopeless struggle with her people dying with their spirit yet unbroken, the birthday of the Prince of Peace will not be celebrated this year in Serbia.

The sorrows of Belgium this year as compared with last are more of the spirit than of the flesh. The voice of Christmas, of peace and good will does not speak very loud to a captive people. With its army terribly decimated, its beloved King all but driven out of his own country, with its daily life subject to the scrutiny and the con-

trol of a stern captor, there is no room in Belgium for any of the old light hearted Christmas spirit that used to show itself in crowded churches for midnight masses and gay all night supper parties. Belgium waits as all Europe waits for the end of the war, waits with faith and hope and a determination as grim as it must be silent.

Happily the physical condition of the stricken people is better than last year. There is not the frightful confusion, the separation of families, the pitiful terror and want that went with the flight before the invaders. All relief measures are better organized. Belgium is no happier this year than last, but she is less cold and hungry.

Of all the outstanding figures of the great war none arouses more immediate sympathy than that of King Albert of Belgium. Still separated from his beloved children, with his wife working in the hospitals like the hundreds of nurses, with his country still held by invaders, this coming Christmas can bring him no joys to dispel the sorrows of the last eighteen months.

This soldier King lives in the trenches with his men, eating their scant ration, sharing their hardships. He and Queen Elizabeth have stripped themselves of every possession of any value for the sake of their country. Hardly a jewel remains of the splendid collection formerly owned by them. Even the beautiful Order of the Golden Rose, sent to Elizabeth by the late Pope, the highest decoration the Vatican can bestow on a woman, has been pledged for funds to buy hospital supplies. It was worth \$25,000 and the Queen would not consent to so

large a sum remaining idle when the extremity of her people was so great. In talking to an American journalist last year King Albert quoted a comment made on him by a New York newspaper when he visited this country in 1918. "This young man," the newspaper said, "will be the luckiest King in Europe. His country is guaranteed by the great Powers. His job will have a small amount of work and a large amount of pay." The King's careworn face relaxed in a sad smile, the correspondent said as he moved on over the sodden war scarred fields of Flanders. Then slowly he repeated, "The luckiest King in Europe."

If the Belgian people ever again have a united Christmas they will find themselves with many new holiday ideas. A tree twinkled in every place that housed a German last year and though the Belgians will not allow their Christmas to be Germanized yet the trees appealed to them mightily. Certainly the Christmas tree will be much more common hereafter in Belgium whether the Germans stay there or not.

Thousands of refugees waiting in England until their country is redeemed will bring back with them many ideas of the English holiday. The young Belgian royal princes, students now at Eton, spent last Christmas as guests of Lord Curzon, where they had their first glimpse of the feasting and jollity of the British holiday season, a season most graphically and charmingly depicted by Dickens.

Until the marriage of Queen Victoria to the Prince Consort Christmas in England was chiefly a day of churchgoing, of merrymaking and of mighty feasting. The Prince

brought with him from his German home the customs of the Christmas tree and of gift giving. The latter has never become as firmly entrenched in England as it is here, but a lighted tree loaded with decorations and presents is established as a part of every English celebration. Christmas decorations of holly and mistletoe, the ceremony of the Yule log and many of the traditional Christmas dishes, notably the plum pudding, are all owed to English custom.

Last year was a typical feasting merry Christmas in England. So far as the great mass of the people were concerned the war had not yet moved them even in their imaginations. A few things had happened to make thoughtful people more thoughtful. Many families were already in mourning. But as yet English complacency was untouched. Whoever pointed out unpleasant facts was dubbed unpatriotic. The greatest interest of the people so far as the war was concerned seemed, as has been said, to get a plum pudding to every Englishman in France and Flanders.

But it is a sadder and wiser England that approaches Christmas this year. Hundreds of thousands of young Englishmen have died to make her so. Last year the Lusitania was a Christmas ship. To-day she is a tragic memory. Last year the Zeppelins had not yet disturbed London. To-day every Londoner to whom the war may have been little more than a graphic lesson in what a powerful and resourceful enemy can do even in a "right little, tight little island." As a further object lesson England will pay for the raisins for her plum puddings something like 200 per cent. more than she did last year. The war with Turkey has done that to her.

England has had other black Christmases, but they were further away from home. The Christmas of 1899 in South Africa was one that she does not like to recall, while the terrible Christmas of 1854, the Christmas of the Crimean war, when, as a writer of the day put it, "Thanks to Gen. Mudde, things are about as bad as they can be," was always a bitter memory to that generation.

The year 1915 has not been a good year for England, and she knows it. The knowledge has shattered her complacency and has strengthened her determination. But she is not happy about it and her Christmas celebration will be a chastened feast.

Christmas in the Latin countries has always been more of a religious festival than a home celebration. In Italy it is more customary to exchange presents at New Year's than at Christmas. Lighted trees are frequently seen, but they are the luxury of the prosperous and not the habit of the people. The day before Christmas is more of an occasion than the day itself.

In the cities of southern Italy booths are erected in certain streets, as before Easter, for the sale of odds and ends and sweetmeats, wheeled traffic is barred and the people promenade slowly up and down, exchanging greetings. Midnight mass is said in all the churches. In the churches, too, are exposed the famous cribs, or presepi, representing scenes of the birth and infancy of Jesus. The beginning of this custom is ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Although Italy has been in the war less than a year, she already feels its pinch. "We can no longer have war-fests," writes an American married in Italy. "With charcoal at 40 cents for a small handful it is out of the question for the first time since I can remember we will not have a pound cake for Christmas. The flour white flour is all gone."

Christmas eve is the great feast of the season in France. In the provinces it is celebrated with processions in the streets, which were originally religious in character but have become profaned by the savagery of the masters. In Normandy and in Provence there are elaborate puppet shows of scenes in the life of the infant Christ. All the street gaily terminates after mass in feasts in all the homes.

In Paris there are Christmas lights set up in many of the boulevards. This year, as last, they will be devoted to the sale of comforts for the soldiers rather than, as in previous years, to toys and knickknacks.

Paris knows better than any one just how black a wartime Christmas can be. She has never forgotten the Christmas of 1870. For ninety-eight days the Germans had battered at the city. Every sortie had failed miserably. The final bombardment was inevitable. On Christmas eve 900 men froze to death in the trenches just outside the city. On Sunday, December 25, 1870, Washington, the American Minister, wrote in his diary:

"Never has a sadder Christmas dawned on any city. Cold, hunger, agony and despair sit enthroned at

every habitation in Paris. It is the coldest day of the season and the fuel is very short and the Government has had to take hold of the fuel question. The magnificent shade trees that have for years adorned the avenues of this city are all likely to go in the vain struggle to save France. So says the official journal of the morning.

"The sufferings of the past week exceed by far anything we have seen. There is scarcely any meat but horse-meat and the Government is rationing. It carries out its work with impartiality. The omnibus horse, the cab horse, the work horse, the fancy horse all go alike in the mournful procession to the butchery shops, the magnificent blooded steed of the Rothschilds by the side of the old pig of the cabman."

"Fresh beef, mutton or pork are now out of the question. A little poultry yet remains at fabulous prices. In walking through the Rue St. Lazare I saw a maddening aged goose and a chicken for sale in a shop window. The price of the goose was \$25 and of the chicken \$7."

Better, it seems, than any of the other nations did France realize from the beginning what this present war would mean and, realizing, she created herself utterly. She has made every sacrifice, great and small, even to giving up the crusty rolls and light white bread that are as the breath in her nostrils. When a Frenchman, every Frenchman, eats without complaint a grayish bread made of a mixture of wheat and rice and entirely lacking in golden crust he has indeed an exalted spirit. It is a small thing, perhaps, but it is enormously significant.

Last Christmas was a solemn festival in France. A million gifts of wool were sent to the men in the trenches. Every soldier had a glass of champagne. But there was no merrymaking. Masses were said at open air altars erected back of the battle lines. In the old church at Tann in Alsace a French Christmas was celebrated for the first time in forty-four years. But it was a celebration of prayer, not of rejoicing.

This year, as last, midnight masses will be said in the churches of Paris, but afterward there will be no joyous in the streets as in former years, no dancing pierrots and baroque bands, no the masses no brilliant round of restaurant appetites, the beloved revelation of the Parisian. When it was suggested to Gen. Gallieni that the restaurants might be allowed to remain open later than usual to permit of a little of the traditional merrymaking he replied:

"There will be no Christmas celebration in Paris while a single German soldier remains in France."

So Paris on Christmas eve will go home through darkened streets with a prayer in her heart for all those who have died for France and for all those who must yet die.

ORANGE TREE EUGENICS.

THE orange growers of California are learning a lesson from the hen man. Time was when people had "hen hens." They handed out the feed and took all the eggs, but they left it to the hen to see how to give them their money's worth.

Then somebody devised the trap net and kept a record of the birds laid. If she scored 100 eggs a year great was her glory, but if she thought a hundred eggs enough for a year's board—then she was a failure. The 20 egg hen and a record lay of 288.

The California orange grower became interested. If hens have to be treated by efficient methods, then why not orange trees? So he began to treat his trees. Instead of merely forcing out his crops and taking the profits, he is beginning to study the performance of each individual tree of the grove—so much fruit, of such and such quality.

But the unphilosophical orange tree does not go to the chop-axe. No! Instead of being cut off at the root and "top worked" it will be bled from the best fruiters; the pruning of the best trees are graded to the worst.

All this has been carefully worked out by the first authorities on the California orange. As Dr. Sumner of the United States Department of Agriculture, San Francisco, recently has shown, there are at least eleven different types of the hard orange, none of which is a seedling in the grove. Yet under one name the same cultivation some yield much more and better fruit than others, and every fruit of each one has all the characteristics of its parent.

Here, then, is one more case of the principle of "breeding for performance." The up-to-date farmer is buying seed corn, beans, calves and other stock on the strength of the performance record of their parents. It is business efficiency in the home-bred world, eugenics applied to animals and plants.



Santa Claus in the trenches. German soldiers in an underground barracks exchanging gifts.



Santa in the war hospital. German wounded find their Iron Crosses on the Christmas tree.



Santa on the firing line. German soldiers in the advanced trenches opening Christmas boxes from home.